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SPECIAL REPORT

A Closer Look at California's Homeless Students and Youth: Programs and Resources Available

This brief is the third in a series released by The California Institute for Federal Policy Research on the topic of student and youth homelessness. The purpose of this brief is to outline the programs and services relevant to homeless children and youth, particularly those who are unaccompanied by parents or guardians. Some programs are targeted towards certain segments of the homeless population, such as students or victims of sexual assault, while other services are provided to the general population at large, such as Supplemental Nutrition Assistance (SNAP) benefits. For a broader perspective of federal programming around homelessness, please visit: <http://fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/RL30442.pdf>.

Department of Education (ED), Education for Homeless Children and Youth (EHCY) Program

The McKinney-Vento EHCY program seeks to protect the rights of homeless students by ensuring their access to the same free, appropriate education, including a public preschool education, as other children and youth. Please see our previous brief for more details --

<http://www.calinst.org/pubs/SpecialReportMcKinneyVento.pdf> .

Definition of Homelessness: Those lacking a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, including those who (1) share housing with other persons due to loss of housing or economic hardship; (2) live in hotels or motels, trailer parks, or campgrounds due to lack of alternative arrangements; (3) are awaiting foster care placement; (4) live in substandard housing; and (5) children of migrant workers.[1]

Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Administration for Children and Families, Family Youth Services Bureau, Runaway and Homeless Youth (RHY) Program

The RHY program is authorized by the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act, which seeks to provide shelter, community services and prevention education for youth, adults and families through the following programs and services: the Basic

Center Program (BCP), Transitional Living Program (TLP), and Street Outreach Program (SOP).

The Basic Center Program supports projects that provide youth up to age 18 with emergency shelter, food, clothing, counseling and referrals for health care. Most basic centers can provide 21 days of shelter for up to 20 youth.[2]

Transitional Living Program supports programs that provide long-term residential services to homeless youth ages 16-22 up to 21 months, including counseling in basic life skills, interpersonal skills building, educational advancement, job preparation skills, and physical and mental health care.[3]

Street Outreach Program prevents the sexual abuse and exploitation of young people living on the streets or unstable housing by providing outreach and education, including counseling, emergency shelter, and referrals for runaway, homeless, and street youth. [4]

Definition of Homelessness: An individual generally not more than 21 years of age who lacks a safe living environment with a relative or other safe alternative living arrangements.[5]

Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) - Homeless Assistance Grants: Emergency Solutions Grants (ESG) Program and the Continuum of Care (CoC) Program

The ESG program provides funding to (1) engage homeless individuals and families living on the street; (2) improve the number and quality of emergency shelters for homeless individuals and families; (3) help operate these shelters; (4) provide essential services to shelter residents, (5) rapidly re-house homeless individuals and families, and (6) prevent families/individuals from becoming homeless.[6]

The Continuum of Care (CoC) Program is designed to promote communitywide commitment to the goal of ending homelessness; provide funding for efforts by nonprofit providers, and State and local governments to quickly rehouse homeless individuals and families while minimizing the trauma and dislocation caused to homeless individuals, families, and communities by homelessness; promote access to and effect utilization of mainstream programs by homeless individuals and families; and optimize self-sufficiency among individuals and families experiencing homelessness.

Definition of Homelessness:

1. Literally homeless – An individual or family who lacks a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence, meaning the individual or family has a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not meant for human habitation or is living in a publicly or privately operated shelter designed to provide temporary living arrangements. This category also includes individuals who are exiting an institution where he or she resided for 90 days or less who resided in an emergency shelter or place not meant for human habitation immediately prior to entry into the institution.
2. Imminent Risk of Homelessness – an individual or family who will imminently lose (within 14 days) their primary nighttime residence provided that no subsequent residence has been identified and the individual or family lacks the resources or support networks needed to obtain other permanent housing.
3. Homeless under other Federal Statutes – unaccompanied youth (under 25) or families with children and youth who do not otherwise qualify as homeless under this definition and are defined as homeless under another federal statute, have not had permanent housing during the past 60 days, have experienced persistent instability, and can be expected to continue in such status for an extended period of time.
4. Fleeing/Attempting to Flee Domestic Violence – any individual or family who is fleeing, or attempting to flee, domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking.[8]

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)/CalFresh

The CalFresh Program, federally known as SNAP, helps to improve access to nutritional foods for California's low-income households.

Eligibility: No age requirement. A homeless youth may qualify as their own household or as part of another's household.[9]

Definition of Homelessness: (1) An individual who lacks a fixed and regular nighttime residence; or (2) an individual who has a primary nighttime residence that is- (A) a supervised publicly or privately operated shelter (including a welfare hotel or congregate shelter) designed to provide temporary living accommodations; (B) an institution that provides a temporary residence for individuals intended to be institutionalized; (C) a temporary accommodation for not more than 90 days in the residence of another individual; or (D) a public or private place not designed for, or ordinarily used as, a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings.[10]

Medi-Cal

Medi-Cal is a public health insurance program which provides needed health care services for low-income individuals including youth up to age 21, as well as families with children, persons with disabilities, youth in foster care, pregnant women, and low income people with specific diseases such as tuberculosis, breast cancer or HIV/AIDS.

Eligibility: Unaccompanied youth may receive Medi-Cal if they are 1) a person who is 14 to 18 years old, who is not living with a parent or caretaker relative and who handles his/her own financial affairs; 2) A person 18 to 21 years old, who is not living with a parent or caretaker relative, is not in foster care, and is not claimed as a tax dependent of his/her parent(s); or 3) A person 21 years old or older.[11]

Recognizing the discrepancies between various federal definitions of homelessness, Senators Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif) and Rob Portman (R-Ohio) introduced the Homeless Children and Youth Act on July 24, 2014.[12] The bill would broaden HUD's definition of homelessness to match ED's definition.

As of January 2011, nearly two thirds of California counties did not offer targeted programs or services to meet the needs of homeless children and youth.[13] For more information, please visit: <http://cahomelessyouth.library.ca.gov/docs/pdf/SUMMARY-Inventory.pdf>.

[1] <http://fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/RL30442.pdf>

[2] <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/fysb/resource/bcp-fact-sheet>

[3] <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/fysb/resource/tlp-fact-sheet>

[4] <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/fysb/resource/sop-fact-sheet>

[5] http://pathfindersmke.org/pfmke/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/Runaway_and_Homeless_Youth_Demographics_and_Programs_0414.pdf

[6] <https://www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/EmergencySolutionsGrantsProgramFactSheet.pdf>

[7] <https://www.hudexchange.info/coc>

[8]

http://usich.gov/media_center/news/hud_tips_and_resources_on_the_new_homeless_definition

[9] "Unaccompanied Youths' Eligibility for CalFresh (SNAP/Food Stamps)." The National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth. Print. September 2013.

[10] <http://naehcy.org/sites/default/files/dl/legis/usda-snap-youth.pdf>

[11] "Unaccompanied Youths' Eligibility for Medi-Cal." The National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth. Print. March 2013.

[12] http://www.feinstein.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/press-releases?ContentRecord_id=6701867e-9559-485f-8ad0-76f3398bfa86

[13] <http://cahomelessyouth.library.ca.gov/docs/pdf/SUMMARY-Inventory.pdf>